

# MINUTES FROM JUNE 30, 2016

## TOM STURTEVANT CHAPTER MEETING

### BRUNSWICK, MAINE

- PRESENT: Richard Clement, Peter Woodruff, Robin Spencer, Herb Hoffman, Clarence "Smitty" Smith, Peggy Akers, Bob Lezer, Bud Buzzell, Dan Ellis, Doug Rawlings, Regis Tremblay, John Morris, and Rita Clement.

Guest: Kate Cronyn from MaineShare

- Richard began the meeting by passing around a card for Christine DeTroy, whose son died recently. Dan attended the memorial service, which filled the Morrill Auditorium in Portland. He was one of the three top lawyers in the state. Many people spoke highly of him.
- For our opening inspirational moment, Richard recounted the story of our good friend Victor Skorapa as he purposively walked (we don't march anymore) at the Brunswick Memorial Day parade. Victor is 93; he began the walk by falling, but then picked himself up and began his slow walk across the Topsham Bridge. The VFP contingent stayed with him and parade organizers respected his pace. The relatively youthful Bob Dale (he's 91) walked alongside his old pal for 1.5 miles. A truly inspirational moment.
- John Morris was inspired by Dan Ellis, who played guitar and sang to begin our last meeting. Not to be outdone, John pulled out his guitar and inspired us with a Merle Haggard song. Now, those of us old enough might remember Haggard's iconic "Okie From Muskogee" that scoffed at folks like us who protested that immoral war we fought in Vietnam. But, hey, even crusty old country and western dudes can have a change of mind, so Haggard, who recently died, had written a song critical of the Iraq War entitled "America First." That's what John sang, with one quick change in a lyric that referenced VFP. By the way, John mentioned that the video that shows Haggard singing this song caught a fleeting moment of VFP's flag in the background. John did a great job. The gauntlet has been thrown down. Anyone with musical talent should step forward at the beginning of each meeting. At our annual awards ceremony, we will vote on the best performance of the year and award the winner with an evening with the governor.
- This meeting we had a very special guest speaker, Kate Cronyn, the director of MaineShare (she is in her fourth year at the helm). She tries to go around and speak to each of the 45 organizations that make up her wonderful organization. This was our turn. She began by sharing that her father was a WWII veteran who didn't speak much of his experiences. But she has a special memory of attending a Bangor Memorial Day parade with him near the end of his life -- Richard's narrative about Victor brought that memory forth. She thanked us for that. Then she launched into a very informative account of MaineShare's infrastructure and activities: first off, she noted that VFP is one of the original 9 members of MaineShare

(1989) -- our first allocation was \$210.00 (our highest amount was \$8,000 in 2008). That allocation has now increased twenty-fold, on average. Secondly, she noted the five focus areas of her organization -- economic opportunity; environment; safety and health; education, cultural diversity, and the arts; and social justice and peace (our bailiwick). Thirdly, she spoke of staffing -- the organization has two full time staff members, including herself and Sarah Fagg ( she has been with MaineShare for ten years) with an annual budget of \$200,000, and a ten-member board that helps make decisions about membership in MaineShare. The organization is audited every year by an outside auditor. As an example of the board's work, she told us that MaineShare has 100 current workplace partners that she works with to fund their giving program. Kate's immediate aspiration is to get more banks involved. She encourages us to speak up about MaineShare whenever we can, emphasizing that the 100 employers she works with have chosen to give their employees more alternatives to giving. This is community building at its best. As members of the organization, we have to project its merits as much as possible, since MaineShare is not as well known as United Way. She would love to double the number of businesses involved as partners -- if a company has a payroll department and subscribes to our values, it could be eligible to join. Right now, she estimates that MaineShare reaches about 60,000 people. She then highlighted an important partner -- Lee Auto Mall. Adam Lee is a strong advocate of the organization and encourages his employees to give what they can. Currently, there are about twenty states that have something like MaineShare, most of them focusing on environmental issues. When asked, she did indicate that MaineShare is interested in enrolling retirees as givers (Bowdoin College includes retirees in its plan). She estimates that about ten percent of employee donors are independent donors -- if you're not a donor, you could give by going to their website. Near the end of her presentation, Regis pointed out how his documentary film projects are indirectly beholden to MaineShare, so he thanked Kate for that. Once she heard of Regis's film, she asked about getting a copy. Finally, she shared with us that she was once the captain of the great peace boat The Clearwater, of Pete Seeger fame. We told her about the Golden Rule and that Pete was a member of VFP. She then left, leaving us well informed and proud to be partnering with such good people.

- The secretary's report from last meeting was approved with no changes. Members voted down a proposal to submit it for a possible Pulitzer prize.
- Dan Ellis presented the treasurer's report, which was accepted. We currently have a budget of \$9,389.69 (\$2,170.70 of that came from MaineShare this month). Dan reminded members that each year we send our Bangor chapter buddies \$500.00.
- Dan Ellis presented the membership report -- no change in membership numbers from last month. We currently have 132 members, 81 of whom are paid up in their dues. Although Dan does send out monthly reminders, if you are not sure if you're paid up, please ask him. Don't wait for late night visitations from our own goon squad (average age of 70 but still can swing a mean wiffle bat).
- Regis reported on his recent trip to Washington, DC where he interviewed Ray McGovern and Peter Kuznik. Regis then mentioned the recent civil disobedience at BIW and the great press coverage received. John Morris, who joined in as a civil disobedient for the first time,

spoke of his experiences as a member of the Zumwalt Twelve. He talked about the positive responses from the Bath Police Department and how police officers actually complimented the group for their good work (one commented that the protestors were the "conscience of our country"). John encouraged us all to become involved in future civil disobedience actions. Doug mentioned how this upcoming issue of PEACE IN OUR TIMES features the Zumwalt Twelve on its cover and starts off with Dud Hendrick's brilliant speech given at the event. Richard then spoke of the Pride Parade in Portland on the same day that the BIW action took place. He was very impressed by the joyous, positive vibes emanating from the city on this day -- very supportive crowds and impressive displays of support from churches, etc. Peggy suggested that our chapter participate in next year's parade, and she will check out how to do that. Peggy also mentioned that there was some degree of fear on the streets during the parade because of the Orlando shootings. These are tough times we live in. Richard read parts of the national VFP statement in support of gay rights. We all agreed that our chapter's participation should be on our agenda for next year.

- At this point in the meeting, Herb Hoffman got up to leave. We have missed him since he moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He still retains membership in our chapter. His presence was indeed welcomed. And then Bob Lezer also had to leave early -- also a welcome voice to have around the table!
- Doug informed the group that the Elders Statement, which we have discussed at the last two meetings, has been altered partly because of our concerns. Point #6 of the statement that called for mandatory service was dropped completely. Point #7 dealing with torture and incarceration was greatly expanded upon in more detail. Since these were the two areas where we were most concerned, we felt very comfortable accepting the statement as it is currently written. Richard moved that we accept the statement; Regis seconded the motion. We voted unanimously to accept the motion. Now we will begin work with the Elders to disseminate it to as wide an audience as possible. Thanks to Fred Brancato and the Elders for their good work.
- Dan reported that the Peace Walk planning is proceeding on schedule. After the Maine leg of the walk ends in Kittery, the Smedleys are planning to continue the walk into Boston. Our chapter has agreed to pay for renting the van, and we will get a dollar amount for that donation soon. Doug also reported that members of the Maine Acupuncture Association would be willing to offer their services at different locations at the end of a day's walking. We had this service for one of our first walks, and it was great. Doug has contact information for the acupuncturists (he attends a weekly acupuncture clinic for veterans in Augusta), so if anyone working on the walk wants to contact him, he can pass on the information. He is willing to organize this service.
- Richard mentioned again that our chapter has committed to have two tables at the Common Ground Fair (September 23,24,&25). We need to work on a theme at the next chapter meeting. But, more importantly, we have to have members sign up to help staff the tables. Each one of us could commit for a few hours on one of the days -- remember that those who volunteer to staff the table will have their fair entry fees paid for by the chapter. Not to mention that it is fun, and very important for us to get the word out about our work.

- Dan showed us the beautiful convention booklet ad from our chapter that he, Peggy, and Doug worked on -- it is very simple: the word "Imagine" on a black background with our logo on the bottom of the page. Bob Lezer's immediate response was very positive. Thanks to Peggy for taking the lead on this and, of course, thanks to Dan for his amazing graphic skills. Doug moved that we spend \$200 for the ad; Bud seconded; unanimous approval.
- Richard reminded us that our chapter has a table at the annual Brunswick Peace Fair (August 6th) from 10:00am to 3:00pm. Members are encouraged to help staff the table and to attend the fair. Our famous button machine will be in full force at the table.
- Richard announced that the Hallowell Parade will be taking place on July 16th this year. He will contact Roger Leisner to see if we can join his group and Women In Black. Last year Dud and Rob Shetterly stole the show. Who will do that this year? Wear your VFP regalia.
- Richard asked if anyone was planning on attending the national convention in San Francisco this year. Doug said that he would be there -- he is introducing the Saturday night keynote speaker, Ann Jones, as well as presenting a workshop on the Full Disclosure movement and reading poetry. The chapter then graciously provided him with its annual \$1,000 check (each year we commit \$1,000 to help members attend the convention) to cover his registration costs, his room fees, and his plane ticket. He reported to me that he is honored and very grateful for the chapter's generosity. Peggy moved to provide \$1,000; Bud seconded; unanimous approval.
- Richard reported that chapters and members have been asked to provide financial support for younger Post Cold War veterans to attend the annual convention. Last year over \$2,000 was received from donations. Doug spoke of a young member he met last year in San Diego who could only get there with our support, and then he went home to Pennsylvania to stand up to the JROTC advocates in his hometown. He said he would not have done that before meeting VFP members. Richard also mentioned that he has given personally and encouraged other members to do the same. Peggy then moved that our chapter provide a \$500 donation to help younger veterans get to the convention; Doug seconded; unanimous approval.
- Richard announced that our stalwart members from the coast, Dud Hendrick and Rob Shetterly, will be joining the artist Lily Yeh to present their work on Thursday, July 21st (7:00pm) at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brunswick and July 22nd (7:00pm) at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Blue Hill. Here's the billing:

BEAUTY, PEACE, RESISTANCE: BAREFOOT ARTISTS IN PALESTINE

Lily Yeh, Philadelphia-based community artist and founder of Barefoot Artists, along with Dud Hendrick and Rob Shetterly, will discuss and show images of their recent work in three areas of the Palestinian West Bank. Yeh uses art to build community, peace, and hope among some of the world's most oppressed people.

I am looking at some of the images of their work right now -- amazing, powerful, and beautiful. Thanks to these two guys for representing VFP once again with such class, commitment, and compassion.

- Richard attended the Moving Wall Vietnam Memorial in Thomaston, Maine over the Memorial Day weekend. He had attended previous Moving Wall presentations and was not as impressed with this one because it was far too "controlled" -- it felt like people were being shuttled through and not given enough time to reflect. Doug suggested that perhaps our chapter could support a visit of the Moving Wall at a future date, and he will work on the logistics (he had brought the Moving Wall to Farmington a dozen years ago).
- Doug reported on his work with the VFP Full Disclosure Project to deliver 147 letters written to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. A full report is available at our website -- [vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org). Briefly, VFP participants were put up at the William Penn House (a Quaker hostel); we used Roger Ehrlich's amazing Bell Tower structure across from the Lincoln Memorial and 300 yards away from The Wall as our gathering point -- the experience there was amazing since we provided 24 hour vigil at the tower, engaging with many, many people since it is a highly visible tourist site, including many Rolling Thunder people who were there to attend a Donald Trump rally (gag!), as we passed out lots of information about VFP; at 10:30am on Memorial Day morning, about twenty of us delivered the 147 letters to The Wall that encouraged people to read the letters, and we then hung out and talked to people (very, very moving experience); at 11:30am we unfurled a banner that read WE REMEMBER THE THREE MILLION VIETNAMESE LIVES LOST and solemnly proceeded to walk alongside the Reflecting Pool that connects the Lincoln and Washington memorials; at 1:00pm myself, fellow Tom Sturtevant Chapter member Peter Morgan ( Peter did a night of vigiling, did a night sleeping in his car, and was very, very active engaging people at the Bell Tower), and Roger Ehrlich attended the formal memorial service at The Wall, and after an hour of speeches and martial music, we laid VFP's wreath at The Wall -- it was a simple wreath with white carnations and a black banner with gold lettering that read Veterans For Peace. Then we went home. Once again, Doug appreciates the chapter's financial support to help make this action possible. By the way, we are very close to having a book of these letters published for members to read.
- John Morris, the aforementioned member of the Zumwalt Twelve, provided us more details about their civil disobedience action at BIW in Bath that Bruce Gagnon had organized. John emphasized the positive interaction with the Bath police (I am writing this as I listen to the news of the police officer shootings in Dallas). His group stopped traffic for ten to fifteen minutes. They were committed to a non-violent action. Bruce had contacted the police ahead of time and had worked carefully to ensure that the demonstration would remain non-violent and effective. National board member Tarak Kauff joined the demonstrators and was arrested. Dan Ellis ran the sound system and Lisa Savage "moderated" the speeches, including not just comments from Dud Hendrick but also comments from Gerry Kamke and others. There were about fifty people attending the demonstration. The people arrested were released after an hour. Their court date is set for August 2nd. The great activist lawyers Phil Worden and Lynne Williams will represent the civil disobedience. John

Morris encouraged us all to think about engaging in more civil disobedience. Dan reminded us that pictures and text from the demonstration are available at our chapter website.

- Richard informed us that Pat Scanlon's video "Extremists for Peace" has been put together and Pat will show it at the convention in San Francisco.
- Please go to the national Veterans For Peace to read our statement about the Orlando shootings.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.
- NEXT MEETING JULY 28th IN AUGUSTA.

Doug Rawlings

Veterans For Peace

Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it. -- Bertolt Brecht

I refuse to live in a country like this, and I'm not leaving. -- Michael Moore

American politics is the entertainment wing of the military industrial complex -- Frank Zappa

Common sense: the insight of mediocrity. -- Theodore Roethke